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ASTER GLAUCODES **GRAY ASTER**

Gray Aster is a perennial with simple or branched, mostly hairless stems that are 20-70 cm tall, and arise from rhizomes with many stems forming colonies. There are numerous alternate, stalkless, entire margined leaves that are 4-12 cm long by 0.5-2.5 cm wide and are hairless and glaucous. The lowermost leaves are smaller and scale-like. The flowers are borne in several to many composite heads of ray and disk flowers surrounded by an involucre of bracts borne on spreading branches. The involucre is 6-9 mm high and is composed of several series of overlapping bracts; the outer bracts are broad and firm, and the inner bracts are narrower and longer and often have purplish tinged midribs. The 8-19 strap-shaped rays are pale lavender and 8-18 mm long by 1-2 mm wide. The disk is 7-12 mm in diameter and consists of numerous flowers with tubular corollas that are shorter than the rays. The bases of both ray and disk corollas are encircled by a pappus of slender white bristles. Achenes are hairless or sparsely short hairy near their tip. Flowering in August.

It is distinguished from other *ASTER* species in Montana by the combination of the rhizomatous perennial habit, glabrous stems and glaucous leaves, and an involucre of broad stiff bracts that are green only on the midrib and tip.